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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

WEDNESDAY, February 14, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FOOD-SHOPPING TIPS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U.S.D.A. and the Consumers' Counsel, A.A.A.

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Once again here are tips from the U. S. Department of Agriculture for Mrs. Housewife who buys the family's food. Here are tips on supplies and prices of seasonal food to help you plan good and thrifty meals, and to help you get your money's worth at the market.

Jack Frost has had a lot to say about what fresh vegetables and fruit you can buy this month, and what prices you pay for them.

That big cold spell the last half of January upset the predictions about vegetables, citrus fruit, and butter and eggs in February. The cold wave hit southern fields of truck crops and froze oranges and grapefruit on the trees. What's more, the weather slowed up the hens and cows. So for the time being it checked the usual February increase in supplies of eggs and butter.

As yet nobody knows exactly how much damage the cold has done to Crops. Damage from freezing weather is always hard to measure because no two crops are alike. Each one responds differently to a freeze. But one certain result is that February shipments of green vegetables from the South will be much smaller. Except for California these southern States hit by the cold are the only States sending fresh vegetables to market in winter.

The report is that vegetable crops in both Florida and Texas suffered severely from the freeze, but California vegetables escaped. Growers in Florida and Texas will probably replant many acres, but the vegetables won't be ready until spring. Before the freeze, the predictions were that winter vegetables would

be fewer this year than last. Now, of course, they will be much fewer.

Perhaps you will be interested to know where the vegetables on the market in February usually come from. Well, Florida supplies a great deal of the celery, new cabbage, snap beans, green peas, green peppers, new potatoes, and tomatoes. Texas furnishes most of the spinach and beets, and large quantities of the fresh cabbage. California sends carrots, celery and lettuce, and California vegetables escaped the frost.

In Florida the frost destroyed practically all tender vegetables. That includes green peas, tomatoes, snap beans and peppers. The frost also did severe damage to the more hardy crops like celery and cabbage. And it completely destroyed the crop of new potatoes in Florida scheduled to go to market just about this time. Probably very few strawberries will be coming up from Florida for several weeks. And no Florida tomatoes and peppers will be on the market until some time in March.

The news from Texas is that spinach managed to survive the frost. Beet tops were killed but the roots escaped injury. As for the fresh cabbage, the freeze split cabbage heads and browned the leaves. So very little Texas cabbage will be on the market this month.

In fact, the cabbage supply in general will be low this month. At this time of year, you generally have your choice of new cabbage from the South or late-crop cabbage from the North kept in storage since the fall harvest. Well, the supply of late-crop cabbage in storage on January first was the third smallest on record. So right now the supply of both new and "old" cabbage is low.

Here's a little news about onions: For the rest of the winter, more onions will be on the market than last year, but in spring, not so many. The onions on the market right now are mostly from the late fall crop in the North. They've been in storage since fall. On the first of January considerably more onions were

in storage than a year ago. But when spring comes, the new onions won't be so plentiful. In the first place, not so many acres were planted to spring onions. In the second place, some those that were planted suffered from the breeze.

Though the reports haven't come in as to the exact damage the cold did to the citrus crop, the news is that Florida and Texas fruit suffered severely. California reports no damage at all. California produces about half our oranges each year, and all our domestic lemons. Before the freeze the predictions were that the orange and grapefruit crops this year would be the second largest on record..... about 45 percent of the grapefruit supply would come from Florida, and 40 percent from Texas. As for oranges, Florida was slated to produce 45 percent of the year's oranges and Texas only 3 percent. How much Jack Frost upset the estimates and calculations on the citrus crops nobody knows yet.

Whenever the weather turns very cold in January, egg and butter prices are likely to go up. Then, when the weather turns warmer, more eggs begin coming on the market again and prices change accordingly. Cold weather usually affects egg prices more than butter prices. The reason is that the weather not only slows up the hen but also delays shipments to market so it is difficult to buy top-grade eggs.

Well, there's a brief review of what Jack Frost has done to winter vegetables and fruits and indirectly to butter and eggs.

Except for the food mentioned, the food picture for February compared to a year ago is about the same as in January. Poultry, eggs, better-grade beef, pork and lamb will probably be more plentiful. But strawberries, butter and lower-grade beef will be less plentiful. More apples and pears are for sale because the usual supplies did not go abroad.

Well, there's the situation right now. In a couple of weeks I'll have more food-shopping tips to report.

